NTSB National Transportation Safety Board

The Chairman's Corner

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Friday, December 2, 2005

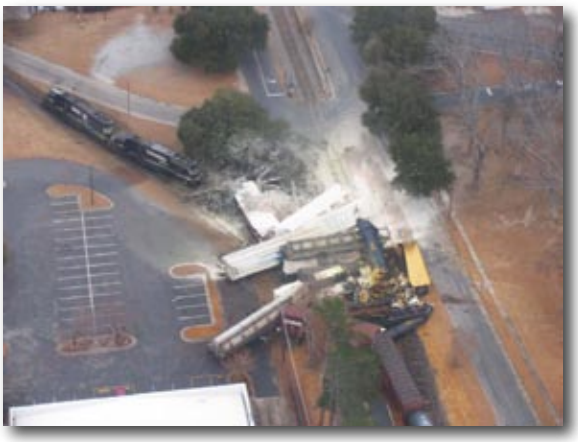
NTSB Honors Captain Charles Simpson, TSB of Canada

Captain Charles Simpson, Acting Chairman of the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB), was honored by the National Transportation Safety Board on November 28 to commemorate his retirement and the many years of cooperation between the Safety Board and the TSB. The Special Recognition Award he received during a ceremony at Safety Board Headquarters reads, "In recognition of your outstanding leadership, statesmanship and commitment to international cooperation to promote and improve transportation safety for the traveling public." Captain Simpson was appointed to the TSB as a Member in 1996 and has served as Acting Chairman since 2001. He has been recognized for numerous accomplishments during his distinguished career. On January 12, 1988, Captain Simpson established the official speed record for Class C1 Jet Aircraft from Honolulu to Montreal with a 747 Aircraft—8 hours, 26 minutes, 09 seconds.

Captain Charles Simpson, second from left, receives award from NTSB Member Debbie Hersman, Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker, and Chairman Designate Ellen Engleman Conners.

Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker offers his congratulations to TSB Acting Chairman Charles Simpson and lauds the long-standing cooperative spirit between the two agencies which has helped solve accidents and improve safety.

Safety Board Determines Probable Cause in South Carolina Collision and Derailment



Collision site of Norfolk Southern freight train 192 with standing Norfolk train 192 with standing Norfolk Southern local train P-22 with subsequent Hazardous Materials Release in Graniteville, South Carolina

On January 6, 2005, northbound Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) freight train 192 encountered an improperly lined switch, which diverted the train from the main line onto an industry track where it struck unoccupied, parked train P22. The collision derailed both locomotives, 16 of the 42 freight cars of train 192, and 1 of the 2 cars of train P22. Among the derailed cars from train 192 were three tank cars containing chlorine, one of which was breached, releasing chlorine gas. The train engineer and eight other people died as a result of chlorine gas inhalation. About 5,400 people within a 1-mile radius of the derailment site were evacuated for several days, many of them complaining of respiratory difficulties.

"This was a tragic chain of events that did not have to happen and unfortunately resulted in the loss of life," said Safety Board Acting Chairman Mark Rosenker. "The Board cannot stress enough the importance of following proper procedures and protocols, at all times, when operating these massive machines."

The Safety Board determined that the crew of train P22 failed to reline a switch back to the main line after using it, leading to the subsequent and unexpected diversion of train 192 into an industry track where it struck train P22 and derailed. The Board also concluded that had the conductor of train P22 held a comprehensive job briefing at the industry track, as required by NS operating rules, the crew may have attended to the main line switch, and the accident may not have occurred.

NTSB Recommends That Each Hazardous Liquid Pipeline Control Center Have a Policy to Review Alarms

As a result of its 3-year Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) study focusing on hazardous liquid pipeline systems, the Safety Board recommended that the Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration require each control center to have a policy for the review of alarms. The Board also recommended controller training to include simulator or non-computerized simulations for controller recognition of abnormal operating conditions, in particular, leak events. The Safety Board made its recommendations at its Board Meeting on Tuesday, November 29, 2005.

In the pipeline industry, SCADA systems collect data from pipeline sensors. Controllers use SCADA to input commands to remotely operate pipeline control equipment including valves and pumps. In the SCADA study, operators reported that SCADA systems enhanced safety and efficiency of pipeline operations. Furthermore, the study concluded that an effective alarm review/audit system would increase the likelihood that controllers will respond appropriately to alarms associated with pipeline leaks.

Foreign Agencies Visit Safety Board

The Office of Aviation Safety hosted a Progress Meeting with the Director of the Venezuelan Comité de Investigación de Accidentes Aéreos, the Bureau d'Enquetes d'Aviacion (BEA), Boeing, Pratt & Whitney, and the Federal Aviation Administration to discuss the investigation of the West Caribbean Airways MD-82 accident, which occurred near Machiques, Venezuela, on August 16, 2005, en route from Panama City to Fort-de-France, Martinique, with 152 French citizens and 8 Columbian crewmembers on board. The investigative States agreed to a press release with the factual data obtained in the investigation. The press release was issued by the Safety Board in English and Spanish and by the BEA in French on November 22, 2005. Special advance consideration was provided to the victims' families.

Photo on right: (l to r) Joe Sedor (US Accredited Rep), Cassy Johnson, Guillaume Aigoin (BEA), Dan Diggins (FAA), Lorllys Ramos (Director - CIAA), Bill Steelhammer (Boeing), Emmanuel Delbarre (BEA), Capt. Hugo Palacios (CIAA), Dominique Verdoni (BEA), Dennis Crider, Abdullah Kakar, Capt. Dave Kirchgessner. [Not pictured - Mike Bartron (P&W)]

Thanksgiving Day Launch

National Transportation Safety Board investigators were on the job on Thanksgiving Day at the scene of a commuter train grade crossing accident in the Chicago suburb of Elmwood Park, Illinois.

About 4:45 p.m., on November 23, a METRA commuter train on an express run from Chicago to Antioch, Illinois, collided with six vehicles that were stopped on the tracks in a long line of bumper-to-bumper pre-holiday traffic at the West Grand Avenue crossing. Three train passengers reported injuries and seven vehicle occupants received injuries ranging from critical to minor. In all, 17 vehicles were either destroyed or damaged in the accident.

David Rayburn, from the Board's Arlington, Texas, office is the investigator-in-charge. Acting Chairman Mark V. Rosenker accompanied the team and served as spokesperson for the on-scene investigation. Other team members included Richard Hipskind, Jay Kivowitz, Reuben Payan, Burt Simon, Henry Hughes, Daniel Walsh, James LeBerte, Jennifer Russert, Robert Accetta, and Paul Schlamm.

NTSB ACADEMY Continues to Promote Human Fatigue Awareness

On November 17-18, 2005, the Safety Board held the Investigating Human Fatigue Factors course. Dr. Malcolm Brenner (NTSB), Dr. Mark Rosekind, Dr. David Dinges, Mr. Dennis Collins (NTSB), and Dr. Jana Price (NTSB) taught this 2-day course, along with a guest speaker, Mr. Tom Curran, who was the first officer from the DC-8 Guantanamo Bay accident, investigated by the Safety Board in 1993.

Following are a few of the many positive comments received from the 81 class participants, who represented various transportation disciplines and Federal organizations:

- *What can I say—excellent. I wish I had it a year ago before my last investigation.*
- *Always a plus to have instructors who are considered pioneers in their field of expertise. Thanks to crash survivor for participating and answering questions from class. Very informative and much appreciated!*
- *There is a lot of information regarding fatigue out there, but this course has added to the meaning of where it's applicable.*
- *Excellent information and format. The application to case studies was great.*
- *Some of the most knowledgeable instructors I've ever seen.*
- *I'll be sending the rest of my staff to this course in 2006.*

A special thanks goes to Safety Board staff mentioned above, who contributed their expertise to help make this course so productive.

Investigating Human Fatigue Factors will be offered again in April and October 2006.